

# The Bulletin of the International Union Against the Venereal Diseases and the Treponematoses

*The International Union against the Venereal Diseases (IUVDT)* was founded in January 1923 on the initiative of the League of Red Cross Societies and the Belgian Association against Venereal Diseases led by Professor Bayet of Belgium. Nineteen nations took part at the first General Assembly in Paris. In the inter-wars years regular meetings were held in the major cities of Europe and of particular importance was the International Agreement of Brussels (1924) for free treatment for seamen infected with venereal disease, and the arrangements for control of venereal disease in Rhine boatmen of the 1930s. However, many notions such as sex education and contact tracing were still taboo at the time.

After the devastation of World War II, the 15th General Assembly was held in Paris in October 1947. Twenty four countries and International Organisations took part. The Union was founded to co-ordinate activities on the social aspects of control of venereal diseases and its objectives have been to stimulate the interest and assist the activities not only of those physicians practising the subject, but also of epidemiologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, public health nurses, social workers, community physicians and others concerned with human behaviour and its effect on the spread of venereal diseases. From very early after World War II, meetings of the Union exemplified the growing role of the newer sexually transmitted diseases and, of course, the 35th General Assembly in London, 9-11 May 1990 will be on this theme, "Sexually Transmitted Diseases in the age of AIDS".

The principle aims of the Union are:

1. To co-ordinate and assist in the dissemination of information and facts about the sexually transmitted diseases.
2. To accumulate and distribute information about the control and prevention of STDs.
3. To stimulate research into the scientific, medical and sociological aspects of STDs.
4. To compile information on trends of incidence of STD throughout the world.
5. To organise meetings and conferences and to participate with other national and international organisations in meetings to study problems related to the understanding and control of STDs.
6. To provide information and material for health education about STDs.
7. To maintain a list of all members, both individuals and associate organisations of the IUVDT with their addresses and telephone numbers.

There is a President, Secretary General, Assistant Secretary General and Treasurer as well as an Executive Committee. There are Regional Branches of the Union in North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, and South East Asia and the Western Pacific. Recent General Assemblies have been in Malta 1975, Leeds 1978, East Berlin 1980, Dublin 1982, Montreal 1984, Paris 1986 and Cannes 1988.

From 1946 there has been a Regional Office for the Americas, instituted through the American Social Hygiene Association divided in 1978 into offices for North and Latin America. The African region was also instituted in 1978. The European region was started in the 1950s, an early meeting being in Monaco in 1958 on non-gonococcal urethritis, the last being in Heidelberg in 1988 in research on the gonococcus. The South East Asian and Western Pacific Region dates from 1975.

UNESCO and WHO took an interest in IUVDT from 1947. In 1948 WHO invited the Union to become one of its official advisory bodies and the relationship much strengthened survives today in that the IUVDT is recognised as a non-governmental organisation by WHO and its advice is taken, not only at the centre at Geneva, but in the regions of the world.

The importance of yaws and endemic syphilis led to the Union being renamed in Rotterdam in 1953 the International Union against the Venereal Diseases and the Treponematoses. The importance of co-operation between WHO and IUVDT led to the great paper on, TREPONEMATOSES AS A WORLD PROBLEM by Thorstein Guthe,<sup>1</sup> the Chief Medical Officer at WHO at the IUVDT General Assembly in London in October 1959, a notable meeting where some of the first papers on metronidazole in trichomoniasis were read by Siboulet and Durel. Many of the technical reports of WHO have had input from the IUVDT, and the IUVDT was represented on the International Travelling Seminar by Dr Andre Siboulet, which went to see how venereal diseases were controlled and treated in the United States in 1971 and was especially critical of the clinical situation at that time.

More recently, several members from the African and South East Asian regions and the Union, represented by the Secretary General, attended the International Consultative Group on Prevention and Control of Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Population Groups at Risk organised by WHO at Geneva in October 1988.

The IUVDT publishes every one or two years, a

technical bulletin on newer aspects of sexually transmitted diseases. Membership is a bargain, \$US20 every two years for individuals with a higher rate for organisations. Joining the Union helps in combating sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS through organised international medical co-operation.

Our President, Dr Andre Siboulet, died on 27 June 1988.<sup>2</sup> In the interim the Immediate Past President, Prof Dr Anton Luger of Vienna has acted as President. The next President, to be ratified in

London on 9 May 1990, will be Prof Dr Detlef Petzoldt of Heidelberg.

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1 Guthe T. The Treponematoses as a world problem. *Br J Venereal Dis* 1960;36:67-77.

2 Waugh MA. Obituary, Dr Andre Siboulet. *Genitourin Med* 1989;65:133.